

COUNTY OF SOMERSET.

CHARD RURAL DISTRICT.



ANNUAL REPORT

-- of the --

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

FOR THE YEAR 1925.

CHARD RURAL DISTRICT

--- in the ---
COUNTY OF SOMERSET.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

YEAR ENDED 31st. DECEMBER, 1925.



TO The Chard Rural District Council.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to present my Annual Report of the Vital Statistics and Sanitary condition of the Chard Rural District for the Year ending 31st. December, 1925.

In Circular 648, dated 10th. December, 1925, the Ministry of Health request that this Report shall be a Survey Report.

NATURAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE DISTRICT.

The District is sub-divided into three registration Sub-districts, viz: Chard, Crewkerne and Combe St. Nicholas.

It includes within its geographical boundaries, but under different Local Authorities, the Urban Districts of Chard, Crewkerne and Ilminster.

Its geological formation may be briefly described as greensand area overlain here and there by chalk overlies, and based on Lias Clays which occupy the lower areas.

Socially the population is principally occupied with farming and dairy-work, but a proportion of the inhabitants are employed in Factories in the District and in the three towns situated in the area. These Factories are chiefly Lace, Net, Hemp and Collar Factories. There is also an amount of home-work performed by women, chiefly Glovemaking in the villages on the Eastern side of the District. There are no unhealthy occupations in the area.

There has been unemployment in the District during the past few years, especially among the Workers in Factories which have closed down or are on short time owing to the general industrial depression.

STATISTICAL MEMORANDA.

Area. ... 52,992 Acres.
Population. (Census 1921). 12,615.
Estimated 1924. 12,640.
Number of Inhabited Houses, 1921. 3,144.
Number of Families or Separate Occupiers, 1921. 3,172.
Population in private families. 12,575.
Rateable Value ... £106,021.
Sum represented by a penny rate £300.

The amount of Out-door Poor Law Relief paid (£2,565) is not excessive, nor is the Gratuitous Medical Relief.

Hospital accommodation is usually required in cases which need operations, or for serious accidents. These are usually admitted to the Taunton & Somerset Hospital, Taunton, or to the Chard or Crewkerne Cottage Hospitals.

VITAL STATISTICS.

1925.

Births: ... Total 199.
 Legitimate " 194.
 Males ... 102.
 Females ... 92.

 Illegitimate Total 5
 Males ... 2
 Females ... 3.

 Birth rate per 1,000 ... 15.8.

Deaths:
 Total number from all causes ... 150,
 Males 68
 Females 82.

Death rate per 1,000 ... 11.9

Deaths of Infants under one year ... 15,
 Legitimate 13
 Illegitimate 2.

Infantile Death rate per 1,000 births ... 75.3.

Deaths of Infants under 1 week ... 7.
 " between 1 and 4 weeks ... 3
 " " 1 and 6 months ... 3
 " " 6 and 12 " ... 2.

Number of Women dying in or in consequence of childbirth,
 from Sepsis ... Nil.
 " other causes 1.

Deaths from Measles, all ages ... Nil.
 " Whooping cough, all ages ... 1.
 " Diarrhoea, under 2 years of age. ... Nil.

There has been no outstanding factor leading to sickness or invalidity other than the seasonal waves of Influenza and Catarrh which occur here when prevalent in the rest of the Country, usually in the first quarter of the Year. In 1925 the disease ran a mild course in the whole. There were 14 deaths due to this disease during the Year.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASE.

In addition to the diseases compulsorily notifiable in other districts, Chard Rural District Council in 1923 with the consent of the Ministry of Health ordered the disease known as Chickenpox to be compulsorily notifiable in the District.

There has been no serious outbreaks of Notifiable Disease in this District recently. Sporadic cases of Scarlet Fever occur from time to time, but prompt action in notification and isolation with exclusion from School of contacts has prevented the disease being disseminated. During the late Summer of 1925 there was a small outbreak in the village of Misterton. This was found to be due to an ambulatory mild case which was unrecognised, and not brought to Medical notice in the early stage. The School was closed for a period, and disinfection carried out by the Sanitary Inspector before it was re-opened.

There was no issue of Diphtheria Antitoxin during 1925, but an up-to-date supply is always kept in hand by the Medical Officer of Health for issue on request to local Medical Practitioners.

There were no cases of Diphtheria notified in the District during last year.

No artificial methods of immunisation have been made use of.



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NON-NOTIFIABLE INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

During 1925 there was an outbreak of Measles at Hinton St. George and Dowlish Wake, the Schools being closed for a period in consequence. There were no deaths from this disease during the Year.

School Teachers throughout the District are instructed to notify suspected cases of Infectious Disease promptly on a Form provided for the purpose to the Medical Officer of Health, The latter having verified the existence or otherwise of the disease then gives written instructions to the School Teacher as to his procedure. This plan is found to be of service.

Disinfection of premises after cases of Infectious Disease, or after death or removal of infectious cases of Tuberculosis is carried out by spraying with Izal Solution, and in certain cases by arrangement with owners by whitewashing and re-decorating the rooms. There is no Steam Disinfector in the District.

There was one case of Puerperal Fever notified during 1925, which recovered.

There were no cases of Ophthalmia Neonatorum. With regard to this disease the Medical Officer of Health is empowered by the Rural District Council to employ a Nurse to give whole time treatment to cases where it is considered necessary in the interests of the child.

The District had been very free from Epidemic Diarrhoea, and there have been few cases of Whooping Cough during 1925.

There were no cases of Polio-myelitis notified during last year.

NUMBER OF NOTIFIABLE DISEASES DURING 1925.

	Cases Notified.	Deaths.	Removed to Hospital.
Scarlet Fever	22	1	1
Peurperal Fever	1	-	-
Enteric Fever	1	-	1
Erysipelas	3	-	-
Lobar Pneumonia	14	2	-
Influenza Pneumonia	5	2	-
Chickenpox	35	-	-
Anthrax	1	-	1
Total.	82	5	3

The case of Anthrax notified was clinically a Malignant Pustule. The patient was admitted to the Taunton Hospital for treatment. The pustule occurred on the face. The patient's shaving brush was forwarded to the County Laboratory, but the result of the bacteriological examination of the brush showed the absence of the Anthrax Bacilli. The patient made a complete recovery.

The case of Enteric Fever was removed to the Taunton Hospital for treatment. Investigation of this case showed that the patient had been drinking water from a well which was contaminated. Steps were immediately taken to remedy this, and no further cases have occurred.

The procedure followed when a case of Notifiable Disease is reported is that the Medical Officer of Health visits the house, and in cases of uncertain diagnosis examines the patient in company with the Doctor in charge of the case; he makes careful enquiries into the source of the infection, the number, ages and occupations of the contacts, and gives instructions accordingly. He also sees that isolation is being carried out as well as circumstances will allow, & sanctions the issue of disinfecting solution in suitable cases.

A Pamphlet containing instructions as to legal position of Notifiable Disease, as well as helpful hints re Nursing, is given to the person in charge of the patient. Periodic visits are paid afterwards by the Sanitary Inspector to see that proper isolation and segregation of contacts is being carried out.

Bacteriological Laboratory work is carried out by the County Council Laboratory at Weston-Super-Mare.
 Samples of drinking water, throat swabs, sputa, blood, etc., are forwarded there for examination as required.

TUBERCULOSIS.

1925.

New cases of Tuberculosis notified, and deaths from the Disease:

Age Periods.	New Cases.				Deaths.			
	Pulmonary.		Non-Pulmonary.		Pulmonary.		Non-Pulmonary.	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
1.	--	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
5.	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1
10.	3	4	-	1	-	1	-	-
15.	2	1	-	1	-	1	-	-
20.	1	2	1	-	-	1	-	-
25.	3	6	-	-	-	1	-	1
35.	1	4	-	-	-	1	-	-
45.	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
55.	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
65 & upwards.	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals.	11	19	4	6	-	6	-	2

PUBLIC HEALTH (PREVENTION OF TUBERCULOSIS) REGULATIONS, 1925.

Particulars of these Regulations were printed and made public in the area as soon as they came into force.

It has not been necessary to serve Notices under Article 5 of these Regulations up to date.

HOSPITAL ACCOMMODATION.

TUBERCULOSIS.

Sanatorium treatment is under the arrangements of the County of Somerset Tuberculosis Centre.

There is no Tuberculosis Hospital in the Area.

There is no Fever or Maternity Hospitals in the District.

SMALL-POX.

The District has its own Small-pox Hospital situated two miles from Chard; the accommodation was increased in 1923 up to 10 beds, with room for further temporary accommodation if required.

There are no regular ambulance facilities in the District.

A scheme which was drawn up for use in the event of a Small-pox outbreak includes the provision of a suitable vehicle for conveying patients to Hospital.

MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE, are dealt with under the County Medical Officer of Health. Arrangements are now in force by which Midwives practicing under the County Scheme may call in a Doctor for Ante-natal treatment in cases where necessary.

School Clinics are held periodically throughout the District under arrangements of the County School Medical Officer.

Tuberculosis Dispensaries under the County Tuberculosis Centre are situated at Chard and Yeovil, where patients from various parts of the District attend for examination and treatment.

VENEREAL DISEASE.

Clinics are held at Chard and Taunton.

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICERS OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY consist of C.C. Court, M.B., Ch.B., D.P.H., Medical Officer of Health (part time); Mr. E. Carter, Sanitary Inspector, Certificated by the Royal Sanitary Institute.

NURSING IN THE HOME.

This is carried out by the District Nurses provided by the various District Nursing Associations throughout the District.

These Nurses also combine this work with Midwifery, being certified Midwives practising under the control of the County Medical Officer of Health.

There are 12 Midwives practising in the District.

The Health Visitors working under the County Council visit cases of non-notifiable infectious disease such as Measles and Whooping Cough, and give advice as to Nursing in cases where no Doctor is in attendance; they also periodically visit domiciliary cases of Tuberculosis.

GENERAL HOSPITAL ACCOMMODATION is provided by the Taunton and Somerset Hospital;

The Chard Cottage Hospital;

The Crewkerne Cottage Hospital;

The Chard Union Infirmary for certain suitable cases.

LEGISLATION IN FORCE.

The Infectious Disease (Notification) Act, 1889, (adopted 23/12/1889)

Orders have been made extending provisions of this Act to diseases known as Cerebro-spinal Fever, Acute Polio-myelitis and Ophthalmia Neonatorum, Acute Encephalitis Lethargica and Acute Polio Encephalitis and Chicken-pox.

Part 3 of the Public Health Act Amendment Act, 1890, (adopted 10/11/1890)

The Infectious Disease (Prevention) Act, 1890 (adopted 16/3/1891).

BYE-LAWS with respect to New Buildings (made 18th May, 1908, confirmed by the Local Government Board 25th. July, 1908).

BYE-LAWS with respect to Tents, Vans, Sheds and similar structures used for human habitation (made 18th. July, 1921) confirmed by the Minister of Health 1st. Nov. 1921).

REGULATIONS.

Connection of Drains with Sewers (29/8/1904)

With respect to Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops under Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops Orders (27th. July, 1908).

WATER SUPPLY.

The Water Supply of the District is obtained chiefly from Springs and Wells.

The following villages have a public supply of water:

CHAFFCOMBE. Water from a spring in Chaffcombe Wood piped to School and to Standpipe in village; pure and ample supply.

COMBE ST. NICHOLAS. Spring at Combe Head. Sample from this water unsatisfactory in 1924, but satisfactory in 1925 after tanks had been cleansed, land around spring cleansed and fenced. Piped to standpipes at intervals in village. Laid on to about 80 houses. Ample supply.

LOPEN. Two public wells and a gravitation scheme for houses in Frog Street. Water laid on to 12 houses recently erected.

MISTERTON. Crewkerne Water Supply laid into houses satisfactory.

WEST CREWKERNE (HEWISH) Two Standpipes from a spring at head of village.

WINSHAM. Gravitation Scheme for houses in Fore Street and Back Street, and some houses in Church Street. Water obtained from Standpipes.

There is an ample supply, and preparations are being made to extend the supply to the whole village with option of inhabitants to lay on supply to their houses.

There is also a village pump
SHEPTON BEAUCHAMP. Shute at bottom of Silver Street. Village Pump in Church Street.

Other Joint Supplies provided by private Owners:

BUCKLAND ST. MARY. Spring in high land above village piped to standpipe in village square.

TATWORTH. Spring at Marl pits just above village piped to village laid on to Schools and some of the houses, remainder from standpipes.

DONYATT. Spring at Park Farm. Water forced by rain into reservoir on side of Herne Hill, hence by gravitation to village; supplies a standpipe in higher part of village, is piped into a number of houses.

HINTON ST. GEORGE. Spring in Hinton Park supplies all Village by gravitation; is laid into houses.

ILMINSTER (WITHOUT). Gravitation Scheme from Springs on Donyatt Estate; is laid into houses.

MERRIOTT. Water from a Spring on Mrs. Dyson's property at Moorlands is piped to a standpipe at Knapp, in the Broadway, and supplies 30 houses.

STOCKLINCH. Village Pump supplies a few houses.

WHITELACKINGTON. Privately owned spring laid into houses.

Samples of water which are suspected of contamination are forwarded to the County Laboratory for Bacteriological examination. Samples of certain of the public supplies are sent annually as a routine; others as it appears requisite.

RIVERS AND STREAMS.

There is no marked contamination of rivers and streams. Effluents from Factories on the banks of rivers are efficiently treated by septic tanks before discharge.

DRAINAGE AND SEWERAGE.

The larger villages have public sewers which take the drainage for the greater part of the houses; certain outlying dwellings which are unable to be connected up owing to the distance from the sewer being too great are served by the conservancy system.

The majority of the sewerage is dealt with by broad irrigation.

The Village of Misterton has an installation of a filtering plant to deal with the sewage of the Village. This is kept under constant observation and proves satisfactory.

The following Villages are mainly on a water carriage system of drainage:

Hinton St. George; Combe St. Nicholas; Misterton;
Souchard (Tatworth); Shepton Beauchamp; Merriott;
and a proportion of the houses in Allowenshay, Horton, Donyatt and Whitelackington.

At Hinton St. George during the past five years there have been many conversions to the W.C. system, and the whole village is expected shortly to be on this system.

In other Villages where the sewers are available endeavours are made to prevail on owners to convert to this system.

In the scattered farms and cottages in the Area, which are served by the conservancy system and where Water Closets are impracticable, as far as possible privy middens are being substituted by the pail system.

SCAVENGING.

There is no regular system, the removal of house refuse, etc., being dealt with by the tenants or by private arrangement, the refuse being used for the manuring of land.

SANITARY INSPECTION OF THE AREA.

SANITARY INSPECTOR'S REPORT FOR 1925.

Number of Premises visited during Year	...	160
Re-inspections	...	171
Reports made on result of Inspections.	...	82
Defects or Nuisances remedied	...	49
Visits or other Sanitary matters exclusive of Housing and above	...	181.

Number of Notices served during Year:

Statutory Notices	...	1
Result Nuisances remedied.	...	1
Informal Notices	...	75
Nuisances remedied	...	49.

SCHOOLS.

Sanitary condition of the Elementary Schools is satisfactory. Inspections are made periodically by the Medical Officer of Health and Sanitary Inspector.

WATER SUPPLY TO SCHOOLS.

Water is laid on to Schools where a gravitation system exists such as Chaffcombe, Combe St. Nicholas, Tatworth, Misterton, Hinton St. George and Donyatt.

HOUSING.

There is a shortage of houses in the Villages of Merriott, Shepton Beauchamp, Tatworth (Chard Parish) and Winsham, and there have been certain cases of overcrowding in the Villages although this has not been general.

The Rural District Council in 1925, therefore, decided to erect four houses at Merriott, four at Tatworth, four at Winsham and six at Shepton Beauchamp.

At Misterton four houses were erected in 1922;

" Combe St. Nicholas ten do.

" Lopen four do.

At Donyatt sixteen houses have been erected during the past five years.

It is intended that the houses which are being erected will be occupied by inhabitants of the villages where they are being built and so relieve overcrowding. This has already been done in a case at Merriott reported to the Council.

The general standard of housing in the Area is fair, the chief defects found are usually that some of the houses are very old-fashioned with small windows and low ceilings, the whole house being too small for a family with growing children. As regards defects which can be remedied there are usually internal repairs such as defective plaster, floors and woodwork.

I have found that owners are usually willing to do what they can towards repairs, but the rents are often very low, and the cost of building still high.

Inspections have been carried out under the Housing Acts of those houses which stand most in need of repair, and in the majority of cases repairs have been secured by the service of an informal notice by the Medical Officer of Health or Sanitary Inspector pointing out the defects and calling on the landlord to remedy them.

In cases of complaint by tenants inspections have been made under the Public Health Acts, and action taken according to the conditions found on the inspection.

Water Supplies were found defective during housing inspections have also been brought to the notice of the owners, and defective Closets have frequently been improved either by conversion to the W.C.system or to the pail system.

There are no unhealthy areas in the District.

The existing Bye-laws, with regard to houses are working satisfactorily and were recently reviewed by the Housing Committee of the Council.

HOUSING STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1925.

Number of new houses erected during the Year:
Total (including Numbers given separately under (b).) ... 15.
(b) With State assistance under the Housing Acts:
(i) By the Local Authority ... Nil (18 commenced);
(ii) By other bodies or persons 10.

UNFIT DWELLINGHOUSES.

Inspection - (1) Total number of dwellinghouses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts):
(2) Number of dwellinghouses which were inspected and recorded under the Housing (Inspection of District) Regulations, 1910, or the Housing Consolidated Regulations, 1925. ... 70.
(3) Number of dwellinghouses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation. Nil
(4) Number of dwellinghouses (exclusive of those referred to under the preceding sub-head) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation. ... 44.

REMEDY OF DEFECTS WITHOUT SERVICE OF FORMAL NOTICES:

Number of defective dwellinghouses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their Officers... 25.
In process of repair ... 17.

ACTION UNDER STATUTORY POWERS.

Proceedings under Public Health Act:

(1) Number of dwellinghouses in respect of which Notices were served requiring defects to be remedied. ... 4.
(2) Number of dwellinghouses in which defects were remedied after service of formal notice:
(a) By owners ... 4;
(b) By Local Authority ... Nil.

Proceedings under Section 11, 14 and 15 of the Housing Act, 1925:

(1) Number of representations made with a view to the making of Closing Orders ... 4;
(2) Number of dwellinghouses in respect of which Closing Orders were made ... 2;
(3) Number of dwellinghouses in respect of which Closing Orders were determined, the dwellinghouses having been rendered fit 2;
(4) Number of dwellinghouses in respect of which Demolition Orders were made ... Nil.
(5) Number demolished ... Nil.

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD.

MILK SUPPLY.

Milk is supplied locally and is generally of good quality. As a rule the Milk consumed locally is retailed by the Producers themselves

A large quantity of Milk is produced in the District which is sent to other parts of the Country either through the Milk Depots in the adjacent towns of Ilminster and Crewkerne, or direct to the retailer.

Much work has been done by the Public Health Staff in endeavouring to improve the conditions under which Milk is produced, and there is doubtless an upward tendency in this direction, while in certain farms in the District the premises and methods leave little to be desired.

The high cost of production is a great obstacle in many cases at present.

For the past two years there have been three Clean Milk Memonstrations held during each year in different parts of the District under the direction of the County Agricultural Institute. These have proved most instructive, and it is hoped will be continued.

Number of Milk Producers on the Register	...	376.
Do. Distributors	Do. ...	25.
Do. Do. who are Producers	...	24.
Do. Do. who are not Producers...		1.

Notices have been published in the local Papers pointing out the necessity for registration, and the Secretaries of the Milk Depots have given much assistance.

There have been no applications for licences to sell graded or certified Milk during the Year.

MEAT.

(1) Inspections have been carried out of all Slaughter-houses and Butchers' premises in the District. These have been found very satisfactory. Suggestions made as to methods of carrying out the arrangements of the Public Health(Meat)Regulations, 1924, have been complied with. In a proportion of the cases the Butchers have given regular times for slaughtering, exclusive of emergency slaughtering; in others they give notice of each time of slaughter to the Sanitary Inspector who is the person appointed to receive them. In the case of diseased Meat the Inspector himself superintends its destruction.

(2) As regards Shops & Stalls:

Precautions have been taken as regards dust and flies such as glazing the front of Shops and covering Meat with Muslin, etc. Meat and Carcases conveyed in carts are now covered in clean cloths or in covered baskets.

(3) There are no Public Slaughter Houses in the District.

Private Slaughter Houses in use in the Area:

	In 1920.	In January, 1925.	In December, 1925.
Registered	22	24	24
Licensed	-	2	5
Total.	22	26	29

OTHER FOODS.

There have been no complaints as to unsound food in the District. There are 17 Bakehouses on the Register which have been periodically inspected and found satisfactory.

FACTORIES AND WORKSHOPS.

The following Factories situated in the Rural District which were working in 1925 were inspected:

Hemp Tow Factory, Dowlish Ford;
Lace Factory, Perry Street, Chard;
Sailcloth Factory, Merriott;
Tooth Brush Factory, Nimmer, Chard Parish.

The results of these inspections were satisfactory.

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Yours faithfully,

(Signed) C. C. COURT, M.B., Ch.B., D.P.

Medical Officer of Health,
Chard Rural District Council.

